GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:718
ANSWERED ON:21.11.2007
DECREASING FOREST COVER IN THE COUNTRY
Gaikwad Shri Eknath Mahadeo;Khan Shri Mohammad Tahir;Mane Smt. Nivedita;Nayak Shri Ananta;Owaisi Shri Asaduddin;Pathak Shri Brajesh

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether UN Environment Programme, Global Environment Outlook 4 has reported that the consumption level are fast depleting world resources;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the China and India are adding to the crisis as they grow at clipping rate;

(d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to protect the decreasing forest cover;

(e) the total forest cover being lost by India each year due to infrastructure development and human usage;

(f) whether the Government has evaluated the impact of industrialization on the depletion of forest cover in the country specially after peoples participation through the mechanism of Joint Forest Management;

(g) if so, the outcome thereof;

(h) whether Government proposes to formulate a policy to check decreasing forest cover in the country; and

(i) if so, details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY)

(a) (b) & (c) The Global Environment Outlook Report (04) under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) mentions about the status of World Resources as a consequence of increase in consumption levels. Demographic factors, specially the population size, has been mentioned as one of the drivers for change in the forest cover, however, there is no specific mention of China and India as countries adding to the crisis.

(d) The Government of India have a two-pronged strategy to tackle the issue. First is to strengthen

(e) The Ministry of Environment and Forests monitors the extent of forest cover on biennial basis through the Forest Survey of India. The State of Forest Report brought out in 2001 and 2003 published by the Forest Survey of India do not show any loss in forest cover during the four years period. Instead, there was an increase in forest cover by 2795 sq. kms. However, due to infrastructure development and human usage the area of the forest land diverted for the non-forestry purposes under the Forest (Conservation) Act is 24,285 ha. during 2004, 12,365 ha. during 2005 and 15,170 ha. during 2006. In terms of the Forest (Conservation) Act, for the forest area diverted, equivalent non-forest area or double the degraded forest area is being planted up through compensatory afforestation.

(f) & (g) The Government of India have not evaluated specifically the impact of industrialization on depletion of forest cover in the country. The National Afforestation and Eco-development Board had commissioned a study on "Effectiveness and Functioning of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs)" conducted by Indian Institute of Bio-Social Research and Development, Kolkata. The study noted that most of the surveyed JFMCs have been engaged in protection from illegal felling and grazing. The study also noted that, in general, the Joint Forest Management has been evolving across the country, however, the degree of institutionalization of JFMCs has been variable across the country.

(h) & (i) The Forest Policy of 1988 envisages increasing the forest or tree cover to 33% of the geographical area of the country. During the X Plan period one of the thrust areas was to increase the forest and tree cover in the country to 25% by 2007 and 33% by 2012.